

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: Takaharu SUZUKI et al.	Art Unit: 1793
Application No.: 10/564,425	
Confirmation No.: 8036	Examiner: M. Shevin
Filing or 371(c) Date: January 11, 2006	
Title: TITANIUM ALLOY PART AND METHOD FOR PRODUCING THE SAME	

PRE-APPEAL BRIEF REQUEST FOR REVIEW

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Commissioner for Patents
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Claims 18 and 20-26 are pending in this application.

Claims 18 and 20-26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lutjering et al. ("Titanium").

Claim 18 recites:

A titanium alloy part having a compressive stress of approximately 270 MPa or more within a depth of about 100 μ m from a surface thereof; wherein

a surface region extends from the surface to a depth of about 100 μ m, and an internal region is disposed internally relative to the surface region; and

the surface region includes a modified layer containing more α phase than does the internal region, the modified layer accounting for a proportion of about 10 vol% or less of the surface region.
(emphasis added)

The Examiner alleged that Lutjering et al. teaches that surface damage such as nicks, scratches, gouges, or abusive machining in the surface of a titanium part create the risk of unforeseen fatigue failure and that "presumably one of ordinary skill in the art would reasonably remove these layers by polishing, chemical milling, or any other appropriate surface removal/smoothing technique to yield a smooth surface free of

crack initiation sites" (see the first full paragraph on page 3 of the Office Action dated July 28, 2008). Applicant respectfully disagrees.

In section 3.7.1 on page 114 of Lutjering et al., upon which the Examiner relied to support the allegation that it would have been obvious to remove the damaged surface layers, Lutjering et al. teaches:

Inadvertent introduction of surface damage (nicks, scratches, gouges or abusive machining) can affect the conservatism of these curves creating unforeseen risk of fatigue failure. **The beneficial effects of shot peening more than compensate for the presence of surface damage** and, therefore, can be thought as introducing a "safety net" with respect to fatigue, **provided the damage is not too severe or too deeply embedded.** (emphasis added)

As clearly seen from the above teaching of Lutjering et al., shot peening more than compensates for the presence of surface damage such that one of ordinary skill in the art would readily understand that the presence of surface damage after shot peening is acceptable to a certain degree. Although Lutjering et al. cautions that the surface damage should not be too severe or too deeply embedded, there is no teaching or suggestion in Lutjering et al. that polishing or chemical milling, such as that disclosed in section 3.7.3 of Lutjering et al., could or should be performed after shot peening to remove severe or deeply embedded surface damage. The Examiner has not provided any evidence that one of ordinary skill in the art would employ polishing or chemical milling to remove severe or deeply embedded surface damage after shot peening, especially in view of the well known fact that polishing and chemical milling are superficial surface treatments that are not likely to remove the severe or deeply embedded surface damage contemplated by Lutjering et al.

The Examiner alleged that "Lutjering et al. also teaches that chemical milling is used to remove contaminated material from the surface of titanium parts, such as oxide layers" (see the second full paragraph on page 3 of the Office Action dated July 28, 2008). The Examiner further alleged that although Lutjering et al. teaches that chemically milled surfaces are often shot peened to create or restore surface residual stress, "this teaching operates on the assumption that peening will not introduce this same class of defects" (see, again, the second full paragraph on page 3 of the Office

Action dated July 28, 2008). Applicant respectfully disagrees.

First, as acknowledged by the Examiner in the second full paragraph on page 3 and the second full paragraph on page 6 of the Office Action dated July 28, 2008, Lutjering et al. teaches that chemical milling is a process used to remove material that has become contaminated "for example, by oxygen, during processing" (see, for example, the first full paragraph on page 114 of Lutjering et al.). In section 3.7.3 on pages 121-122, Lutjering et al. teaches that chemical milling is a common way to selectively remove material from the surface of a component "to create an array of features," e.g., a waffle pattern to impart stiffness. Nowhere in the disclosure does Lutjering et al. teach or suggest that chemical milling should be performed after shot peening to reduce surface damage.

Second, on the one hand, if the shot peening does not introduce the same class of surface defects or damage alleged by the Examiner, one of ordinary skill in the art would not subsequently chemically mill the shot peened surface since there is no surface damage that should be removed. In this circumstance, the modified layer containing more α phase of the titanium due to the shot peening would extend much farther into the surface region of the titanium and clearly does NOT account for a proportion of about 10 vol% or less of the surface region, as recited in Applicant's claim 18.

On the other hand, if the shot peening does introduce the same class of surface defects or damage alleged by the Examiner, and assuming *arguendo* that one of ordinary skill in the art would subsequently chemically mill the shot peened surface, Lutjering et al. clearly teaches that the chemically milled surface should be shot peened to restore the surface residual compressive stress. According to the Examiner, chemical milling should be performed whenever the shot peening introduces surface defects or damage, and shot peening should be last the step in the process only if no surface defects or damage are introduced during this shot peening step.

Thus, in view of the above allegations by the Examiner and the emphasis by Lutjering et al. that shot peening should be performed after chemical milling to create or restore the surface residual compressive stress, any step of chemical milling should

always be followed by a step of shot peening until the shot peening does not introduce any surface defects or damage. Thus, the last step will ALWAYS be shot peening in which the modified layer, which contains more α phase of the titanium due to the shot peening, extends much farther into the surface region of the titanium and clearly does NOT account for a proportion of about 10 vol% or less of the surface region, as recited in Applicant's claim 18.

In the Advisory Action dated November 5, 2008, the Examiner alleged that "through the proper selection of peening parameters [the] alpha phase would not be formed during peening." The Examiner further alleged that "a two-tiered peening approach is within the purview of Lutjering where a first intense peening step designed to impart residual compressive stress deep within the target titanium part leaves a cracked surface which is then removed by polishing or milling" and to reapply the residual compressive stress, "a very light peening process designed to not introduce 'deep scratches' or 'heavily damage' the surface is applied."

Applicant respectfully disagrees for the following reasons.

First, the Examiner's allegation that the alpha phase would not be formed if the shot peening parameters are properly selected is incorrect. It is a well known fact that shot peening inherently creates an alpha phase in the surface of the titanium (see, for example, paragraph [0045] of Applicant's Substitute Specification filed January 11, 2006). Furthermore, assuming *arguendo* that it is somehow possible to select shot peening parameters such that an alpha phase is not created, which as noted above is directly contrary to what is well known to those of ordinary skill in the art, the Examiner has not established or provided any support for his conclusion that the recited compressive stress of "approximately 270 MPa or more within a depth of about 100 μm from a surface" would be created in the titanium alloy part.

Second, Lutjering et al. does not teach or suggest a two-tiered peening approach, let alone that the second peening step should be "very light" so as not to create an alpha phase when reapplying the residual compressive stress. Nowhere does Lutjering et al. teach or suggest a "very light" shot peening, whatever that may be, and the Examiner has not shown by any objective evidence that a "very light" shot

peening would still result in a modified layer containing more α phase than does the internal region wherein the modified layer accounts for a proportion of about 10 vol% or less of the surface region.

Thus, Lutjering et al. clearly fails to teach or suggest the features of "A titanium alloy part having a compressive stress of approximately 270 MPa or more within a depth of about 100 μ m from a surface thereof" and "the surface region includes a modified layer containing more α phase than does the internal region, the modified layer accounting for a proportion of about 10 vol% or less of the surface region," as recited in Applicant's claim 18.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lutjering et al.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 18 is allowable. Claims 20-26 depend upon claim 18, and are therefore allowable for at least the reasons that claim 18 is allowable.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance are solicited.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-1353.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: November 26, 2008

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